



Disabilities Network of
Eastern CT, Inc.
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TESTIMONY OF CATHERINE FERRY

CT ASSOCIATION OF CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

FEBRUARY 11, 2010

APPROPRIATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES BUDGET

Good evening,

My name is Catherine Ferry, from Portland CT. I am the president of the CT Association of Centers for Independent Living (CACIL), and the executive director of The Disabilities Network of Eastern CT (DNEC), in Norwich.

The five Centers for Independent Living in CT are federally and state mandated, consumer controlled and run agencies, serving any and all persons with any disability. We provide essential services, information and referral, peer counseling, advocacy, independent living transition services, special education advocacy, vocational counseling and placement, housing referrals, assistive technology, and many other services in conjunction with, and in referral to, other local agencies. We are cost effective. We utilize, not duplicate, the existing service network. We help folks with disabilities learn how to help themselves. For example, my agency, DNEC, provides multiple specialized services to the large Deaf community in eastern CT, including ASL interpreter advocacy, video phone services, outreach, CAPTEL phones and other services to those who are hard of hearing, especially seniors. We teach an ASL class for the community. We offer various support services for parents of special needs children. We run local advocacy and support groups. We help towns to assess their ADA building and publicity/ meeting compliance.

We are funded through a mix of federal and state matching funds, as well as grants, and private donations. The CILs federal funding is allocated to provide

specific disability services; peer counseling, I&R, independent living skills training, individual advocacy and systems advocacy.

CILs need state funding to provide the on-going infrastructure (rent, utilities, computers, phones, administrative staff) to support our delivery of important state grant programs such as; Money Follows the Person (MFP), BRS/BESB job coaching, Ticket to Work, Connect-Ability, Tech Act assistive/ rehabilitation technology. All of these grants are designed to reduce state Medicaid costs while increasing the independence, and, oftentimes, full participation and tax paying ability of CT citizens with disabilities.

While it is true that Federal ARRA funds available to DSS may be assigned to CILs, these are program dollars, not infrastructure. They are time limited and program driven.

The DSS budget line for Centers for Independent Living (CILs) was cut by \$251,000 (38%) in FY 2009/10, and the Governor again proposes to eliminate state funding to CILs in FY 2010/11. We have already been forced to layoff staff and scale back programs. My overworked staff have not had an increase in two years. Surely, this proposed cut is the proverbial pennywise and pound foolish analogy. CILs are such a small funding amount in big picture, yet we leverage and provide so many services, implement so many state programs at low cost, and save so many Medicaid dollars.

The Long Term Care Planning Council, the Commission on Aging and DSS recently gave a detailed presentation to you on the future of ADRCs for CT. Aging and Disability Resource Centers. One stop shopping for entitlement assessment, referrals, housing, and long term care services. I can tell you, that without state, federal, or pilot funding, DNEC already performs those functions in eastern CT. Working closely with our colleagues at Senior Resources, we are the "go to" source. CILs are the best deal around for the price. We've been here for twenty years. We don't need planning and start up time. We're moving folks into the community and out of nursing homes. Sustain what you have, build on us. Don't cut our necessary state base funding and replace it with reduced, time limited, strings attached, soft, squishy federal funding. Thank you.